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ABSTRACT

A writing folder is a resource tool which has been designed to reflect the phases of the writing process and which complements other classroom strategies and teaching methods used to enhance the understanding of this process. A field test was conducted during the 1985-86 school year to gather information on the use of writing folders in 78 North York (Ontario) schools. One component of the field study was a 23-item questionnaire distributed to and completed by teachers in the 78 schools. A selected number of classes were visited to observe students using the folders, and a checklist form was used to record observations. The results of both survey responses and classroom observations showed that writing folders seem to be well received by the teachers and students who use them and are perceived to have had a positive effect on students' writing in terms of process as well as product. The questionnaire and the classroom observation checklist are appended. (JAZ)

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NORTH YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH REPORT

ED276735

WRITING FOLDERS

FIELD STUDY

1985 - 86

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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May 1986

TM 860 605

Writing Folders Field Study

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WRITING FOLDERS FIELD STUDY

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WRITING FOLDERS FIELD STUDY
1985 - 1986

I BACKGROUND

In recent years, language guidelines from both the Ministry of Education and the North York Board have tended to emphasize the **process** of writing in teaching and evaluating writing skills. In simple terms, the three phases of the writing process include prewriting, writing and postwriting activities; representing the way in which language is processed. Ideas surfaced, formulated and discussed in the prewriting phase, are composed in the writing phase, to be tested, evaluated, and reshaped throughout the postwriting phase.

A writing folder is a resource tool which has been designed to reflect the phases of the writing process and which complements other classroom strategies and teaching methods used to enhance the understanding of this process. In essence, the writing folder facilitates the process of writing by dividing the process into its discrete components or phases. As well, the folders are intended to encourage individualization, conferencing about writing, and comprehensive record-keeping about the writing progress.

In March of 1985, commercially-produced, vinyl folders with three flaps and unlabelled pockets were introduced into six elementary schools in the Bathurst/Fleming family and five schools in the Mackenzie/Northview family as part of a pilot study. Twenty-five teachers in those two families agreed to participate as field-testers of the writing folders and in June, they were asked to provide feedback about the following: impact on students and teachers, the Writing Folder Handbook, the folder itself, management systems, support services, recommendations and suggestions. Their reactions were overwhelmingly favourable.

Later in June, the concept was presented to elementary principals, program leaders, conveners, chairpersons and department heads responsible for language programs and again, the reception was extremely enthusiastic. This positive response was also reflected in the numerous requests for folders which followed from teachers in all three panels.

In September 1985, writing folders with accompanying handbooks were distributed to 78 schools across the system.

II PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Since writing folders represent a different approach to the writing component of the language curricula, the decision was made to continue the field test through the 1985-86 school year and to gather further information on the use of the folders and the effects of that use. The purpose of this study was to attempt to demonstrate whether or not the use of the folders fulfils the following objectives:

- motivates students to improve writing styles and skills
- improves the ability of teachers to assess and modify programs to meet the needs of students.

- motivates students to write more frequently and more creatively
- encourages students to improve the organization of their work
- helps students to clarify the steps in the writing process
- provides satisfactory pieces of work for summative and formative evaluation
- provides evidence of students' accepting responsibility for their own learning in the use of their folders.
- increases students' willingness to share their work.

III RESULTS OF THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

One component of the field study was a questionnaire developed by the Research department in consultation with the Coordinator of English and members of the Field Study Steering Committee.

This instrument (Appendix A) consisted of 23 items, including both closed and open-ended questions, and was designed to collect detailed and comprehensive information from teachers at all grade levels and across all three panels of the North York system. Teachers were asked to record, as fully as possible, their previous experience (if any) using writing folders, how they apportioned the time during their writing program, whether or not the folders assisted them in student evaluation and reporting to parents, the degree of change they could observe in their students' writing performances and attitudes, and observations and suggestions that would be useful for future users of the folders.

In March of 1986, questionnaires were distributed to contact persons in the 78 schools that were involved in the field study. Contact persons were to request that the questionnaires be completed by teachers working with as many different kinds of classes as possible. Completed questionnaires were then forwarded to the Research Department for collating and analysis.

The results of the questionnaire are presented within the following topic areas:

- Description of the respondents
- Apportionment of writing time
- Field study objectives
- Reporting, and parent reactions
- Suggestions for improvement and classroom management

Description of the Respondents

In total, 302 questionnaires were distributed on the basis of one for every 30 writing folders that had been requested by the schools. One hundred and eighteen were returned from 48 schools, but it was clear that in secondary and junior high schools, for example, the same teacher taught several English classes. Following the directions that accompanied the questionnaire, the teachers selected one class on which they based their responses. Again, in many intermediate and elementary schools, classes were taught by teams of teachers and the team then completed the questionnaire cooperatively. It is important to note, then, that although the actual return rate for individual questionnaires was 39%, these represented 62% of the schools involved.

Teaching staff who responded represented all panels, with 51 elementary, 11 intermediate and 23 secondary returns. In addition, teachers in positions of responsibility, who completed questionnaires, included thirteen conveners (elementary and middle schools position of responsibility), nine chairpersons, six department heads and five assistant department heads. Altogether, completed questionnaires were received from 67% of the elementary schools, 64% of the intermediate schools and 52% of the secondary schools comprising the study.

One hundred and four of the teachers indicated that the classes on which they were reporting were regular grades. These included all elementary, intermediate and secondary grades from junior kindergarten to grade thirteen.

In addition to these regular classes, there were eight special education and five gifted classes, plus a French immersion class at each of the elementary and intermediate panels. At the secondary panel eleven classes were advanced, thirty-four were basic, two were modified basic and one was gifted.

Most of the teachers in the elementary (67%) and intermediate (65%) schools had not used writing folders before taking part in the field study. At the secondary panel the division was 50-50 between those who had and those who had not used folders before. Of the teachers who had had some experience, most at the elementary level had used them between 1 and 2 years, while a few had been using them for 4 or more years. At the intermediate level, of the eight teachers who had used them before, four had used them for more than 4 years. Among the teachers of secondary students who indicated previous experience, six had used the folders between 1 and 2 years, while six had worked with them for 4 years or more.

Table 1 (a)

Percentages of teachers indicating previous experience using writing folders

Elementary		Intermediate		Secondary	
Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
33	67	35	65	50	50

Table 1 (b)

Length of experience of teachers having used folders previously

Year(s)	1 #	2 #	3 #	4 #	5 #	More than 5 #
Elementary (N=20)	7	7	2	1	1	2
Intermediate (N=8)	1	-	3	1	-	3
Secondary (N=17)	4	2	5	4	-	2

Apportionment of Writing Time

It was a central aim of the study to discover whether or not using the folders assisted the teachers and students in both comprehending and managing the phases of the writing process (pre-writing, writing, post-writing) and also whether attempts were being made to encourage greater varieties of writing among the three major types (expressive, transactional, poetic).

In answering the question, "Approximately how many hours each week do students use their writing folders?" the teachers of elementary pupils showed the widest spread in terms of the amount of use at school. Twenty-three percent reported a weekly use of between 1 and 2 hours, while 44% said that their students used the folders between 2 and 3 hours and 20% reported that their students used them between 3 and 4 hours. In the intermediate panel 91% of the teachers reported that their students used the folders either between 1 and 2 hours (56%) or between 2 and 3 hours (35%). At the secondary panel, 65% of the teachers indicated that their students used the folders between 1 and 2 hours per week at school.

The pattern of home use is quite different. Teachers reported that very few elementary students use their folders at home. In fact, based on comments in other parts of the questionnaire, it seems the majority of elementary students' folders are kept in their classrooms. Teachers of students in junior high and middle schools report somewhat more use at home than the elementary children, but a much greater "optional" use. Since several teachers at this level also indicated that the folders were kept at school, this figure suggests that students could ask for the folders to use while at school during their "free time". Thirty-five percent of secondary teachers said that their students use the folders between 1 and 2 hours at home. A very large percentage of teachers in all three panels did not answer this part of the question, perhaps because they do not know how often the students use their folders at home.

Table 2

Percentages of teachers reporting the number of hours each week folders are used by students

(a) in school

	1-2 %	2-3 %	3-4 %	More than 4 %	It varies %	N/A %
Elementary	23	44	20	7	5	-
Intermediate	56	35	9	-	-	-
Secondary	65	12	8	-	-	15

(b) at home

	1-2	2-3	More than 3	-	Optional	N/A
Elementary	2		-	-	3	95
Intermediate	17	4	-	-	35	43
Secondary	35	9	9	-	-	47

As may be seen by the following table, teachers in all panels estimate that the greatest proportion of in-school writing time is spent on expressive writing, for example, language experiences, journals, log books and personal letters. Eighty percent of the elementary teachers, 74% of those in the intermediate panel and 70% of the secondary teachers estimate that their classes spend 40% or more of their class time on this type of writing.

When students write biographies, autobiographies, stories, poetry, novels or scripts they have moved into poetic writing. The vast majority of teachers (59% elementary, 78% intermediate, 88% secondary) reported that between 0% and 39% of class time is spent on these types of assignments. It is interesting to note that 13% of teachers of intermediate students indicated that their classes were spending up to 60% of class time on poetic writing.

Intermediate level teachers also indicated quite wide use of transactional writing. Seventy-eight percent reported that their students were doing formal letters, projects and newspapers for between 20% and 59% of their class time, while 43% of the elementary teachers reported doing that much. At the secondary level the percentage of transactional writing was much more varied, with 15% indicating that transactional writing is being done less than 20% of class time and 21% indicating that their students are doing this type of writing more than 60% of the time.

Table 3

Percentages of teachers' estimates of the proportion of time spent on the major types of writing.

	0-19 %	20-39 %	40-59 %	More than 60 %	N/A %
Expressive					
Elementary	3	8	31	48	10
Intermediate	4	13	48	26	9
Secondary	6	18	38	32	6
Poetic					
Elementary	33	26	5	2	34
Intermediate	39	39	13	-	9
Secondary	50	38	6	-	6
Transactional					
Elementary	18	23	20	11	28
Intermediate	9	39	39	4	9
Secondary	15	32	26	21	6

In estimating the percentage of classroom writing time spent on pre-writing activities, 28% of the elementary teachers reported that they spent up to 19% of the time on pre-writing activities, while 38% reported between 20% and 39%. The intermediate level teachers' reports were similar, with a total of 70% divided equally between those reporting up to 19% of writing time and those reporting between 20% and 39% of writing time spent on pre-writing activities. It must be remembered, though, that sizeable amounts of pre-writing activity, particularly at the elementary level, and to a certain extent at the intermediate level, are spent outside of the classroom on field trips. Of the secondary teachers 50% spent between 20% to 39% of class time on pre-writing.

Table 4

Percentages of teachers' estimates of the proportion of writing time spent on pre-writing activities

	0-19 %	20-39 %	40-59 %	More than 60 %	N/A %
Elementary	28	38	15	3	16
Intermediate	35	35	13	9	9
Secondary	18	50	18	6	9

With regard to the amount of pre-writing that would be revised and/or edited and proceed to the writing stage, most teachers indicated that more than 60% of what the students did would proceed that far, whereas a much smaller proportion of the pieces of writing begun by students would be again revised and/or edited for the post-writing or "publishing" phase.

Table 5

Percentages of teachers' estimates of the proportion of pre-writing activities that would proceed to the stage of:

	0-19 %	20-39 %	40-59 %	More than 60 %	N/A %
(a) Writing					
Elementary	2	8	13	51	26
Intermediate	-	-	4	70	26
Secondary	-	6	9	71	15
(b) Post-Writing					
Elementary	28	16	11	13	31
Intermediate	9	39	13	9	30
Secondary	12	26	18	15	29

Field Study Objectives

Does the use of the writing folders motivate students to improve their writing styles and skills?

In responding to the question, "To what extent do you think the use of the folders has helped to improve students' writing skills?" teachers were asked to select a number across a continuum from 1 - 5 that best expressed the degree of change that they felt had occurred.

The results were quite conclusive. Seventy-nine percent of secondary teachers, 88% of elementary teachers and 90% of the junior high and middle school teachers indicated that using the folders had, indeed, helped their students in improving their writing skills.

Further, the teachers were asked to respond in a similar way to the question, "To what extent are your students attempting more and different styles of writing than they did before?" Staff were still decisive, although the percentages were not quite as high as they were regarding improvement in writing skills. Seventy percent of secondary teachers reported that students were attempting more and different styles of writing, 76% of elementary teachers had seen improvement, as had 82% of the teachers in the intermediate panel.

Table 6

Percentages of teachers indicating the degree to which using writing folders had helped students improve their writing skills

1 = very much, 3 = to some extent 5 = not at all

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	N/A %
Elementary	18	36	34	8	3	-
Intermediate	17	30	43	9	-	-
Secondary	9	32	38	12	3	6

Table 7

Percentages of teachers reporting that their students were attempting more and different styles of writing than they had before

1 = very much, 3 = to some extent 5 = not at all	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	N/A %
Elementary	7	31	38	20	5	-
Intermediate	4	30	48	13	4	-
Secondary	9	29	32	12	12	6

Does using the writing folders improve teachers' ability to assess and modify programs to meet the needs of students.

Teachers were asked to explain and/or to give examples in answering the question, "How has using the writing folders helped you to assess and modify your writing program to meet the needs of your students?" As can be seen in the following tabulation of comments, the benefits most frequently cited by teachers were:

- aid in individualizing the program
- increased awareness of the developmental levels of students
- help in delineating the writing process

Table 8

Teachers' indications of how writing folders have helped them assess and modify their writing programs

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. Individualized the program/identifies needs and interests and skills to be taught/individual conferences facilitated	12	4	9
. Organization of work, keeps it in one place/helps me explain to kids/I am more aware of work in each genre	6	3	3

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. Process helps teacher assess and focus on writing process, structure and developmental nature of students' writing	4	4	4
. Clear procedures, broader topics/ students more aware of process/more revision and editing/more varied writing/reveals organizational skills	2	-	5
. Provides motivation/students more eager to write/pride in folder carries over in attitude towards other written work	6	1	2
. Provides degree of success and encouragement for reluctant students/ greater sense of improvement	2	1	1
. No difference/no improvement	2	1	2
. I'm beginning to see the need for students to do a lot more personal writing before they attempt more formal assignments	-	1	1
. I get more ideas from the students/ more freedom discourages plagiarism	-	1	2
Other			
. Encouraged students to share work at various stages/folders help them to quickly compare their recent work with previous efforts	-	-	2
. Does lend itself to continuous writing from day to day	1	-	-
. Made me aware that not all writing needs to be or should be carried through to a final stage	-	1	-
. Not enough time to really help 30 - 35 kids in class	-	1	-
. I have allowed folders to travel home. This cuts organizational time spent in class	-	1	-

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. Has made me realize the importance of establishing writing centres	-	1	-
* No Answer	25	4	9

* Note: For each table of comments the numbers of teacher responses and "no answers" do not total the N. Due to the length and complexity of many teacher responses to the open-ended questions, portions of comments were included in more than one group of statements.

Does using the writing folders motivate students to write more frequently and more creatively?

As shown in Table 7 the teachers indicated very strongly that students were attempting more and different styles of writing.

As may be seen in the following table, in their responses to the question, "To what extent has the use of the writing folders motivated your students to write more often than previously?" teachers were again very positive in their observations that their students were motivated to write more often. This was true for 79% of the teachers of secondary students, 82% of teachers of intermediate students, and for 90% of the teachers of elementary students.

Table 9

Percentages of teachers indicating that using the writing folders had motivated their students to write more often than previously.

1 = very much, 3 = to some extent 5 = not at all

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	N/A %
Elementary	26	38	27	7	3	-
Intermediate	13	30	39	13	4	-
Secondary	21	29	29	9	6	6

Does the use of the writing folders encourage students to improve the organization of their work and help them to clarify the steps in the writing process?

It was part of the design for the study that evidence regarding student attitudes towards and understanding of the writing process would be gathered during the classroom visits when interviewers could conduct direct discussions with students and, at the same time, could see the folders and watch their use in the classroom. As can be seen in the discussion of the CLASSROOM VISITS that appears later in this report, most especially under the topics:

- Description of the Folders and Inserts, and
- Discussions with Students

it is quite clear that the students are very knowledgeable about the steps in the writing process and that they believe that using the folders has, indeed, helped them to improve the organization of their work, not only in the Language program, but in other subjects as well. Many teacher comments on the questionnaires reinforce the students' views.

Does the use of writing folders provide teachers with satisfactory pieces of work for summative and formative evaluation?

The teachers were asked to state whether or not they obtained enough pieces of writing to enable them to evaluate the development of their students' writing, formatively, during the three phases of the writing process, and also whether or not enough pieces were carried through the revision and editing stages to the post-writing or final product phase for summative evaluation purposes. As the following table shows, the teachers were emphatic in their endorsement.

Table 10

Percentages of teachers reporting whether or not using the folder provides them with satisfactory pieces of work for evaluation purposes.

	Yes %	No %	N/A %
(a) Formative (writing in process)			
Elementary	89	5	7
Intermediate	96	-	4
Secondary	88	6	6
(b) Summative (final products)			
Elementary	80	10	10
Intermediate	96	-	4
Secondary	85	6	9

They were also requested to expand on their "Yes" or "No" answers with comments. The tabulation that follows shows that, although teachers expressed some reservations, such as the need to include writing other than what students might have in their folders and also not having enough time to cope with the amount of writing being produced by students, on the whole, they find the folders to be a valuable aid in the evaluation process.

Table 11

Teachers' comments regarding whether or not writing folders assist the evaluation process

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. Plenty of material/often too many pieces	7	4	4
. Facilitates organization allowing for discussion at each stage leading to finished product and evaluation	4	2	2
. Rather early to assess, difficult for 65 grade 2 students/evaluation mostly formative	4	1	-
. Other writing still needed for satisfactory evaluation	3	-	4
. No more than we had before	4	1	2
. Ongoing evaluation of both formative and summative possible through this program	1	-	1
Students are seen one hour per day for English (Grade 3, French immersion/in junior high = 55 minutes) time is extremely limited making it difficult for a true assessment of the folders.	1	1	-
Other			
. It varies, some students have a lot of writing, some not much	1	1	3
. I get much writing that has little to do with the folders other than as a storage place	1	-	-
. We all (teachers and students) use it/ evaluation depends on project	-	1	-

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. It provides the student with enough to choose from/lets the student feel more a part of and having some "control" in process of evaluation	-	-	1
. The course is a writing course/study of techniques used by accomplished writers, with application by students.	-	-	1
* No answer	36	13	20

Does the use of the writing folder provide evidence of students accepting responsibility for their own learning?

It was an important component of the field study to have some indication as to whether or not the use of writing folders encouraged and facilitated more self-directed learning and initiative on the part of students. To this end, teachers were asked to respond to two closed questions,

> "To what extent has the use of the folders improved students' willingness to revise and edit their work?" and,
>
> "To what extent do your students approach you more often for assistance with their writing?"

They were also requested to respond to the open-ended question,

> "What ways have the students devised for their independent use of the folders?"

There were very favourable responses to the two closed questions, where the percentages of teachers in all panels who indicated positive change varied from 76% to 83% to the first question and from 62% to 74% to the second.

Table 12

Percentages of teachers indicating the extent to which the use of the folders improved students' willingness to revise and edit their work.

1 = very much, 3 = to some extent, 5 = not at all

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	N/A %
Elementary	15	30	38	10	7	2
Intermediate	4	17	57	22	-	-
Secondary	32	18	26	12	6	6

Table 13

Percentages of teachers indicating the extent to which students approach them more often for assistance with their writing

1 = very much, 3 = to some extent, 5 = not at all

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	N/A %
Elementary	15	18	41	18	7	2
Intermediate	9	22	39	26	-	4
Secondary	6	21	35	21	12	6

In addition, as can be seen from the following table, students have found very creative personal ways of working with folders. These included using it to store, among other items, computer disks. This may indicate the growing number of teachers who are integrating word-processing with microcomputers into their writing programs. An interesting innovative use reported by teachers of elementary and intermediate students was as a "Privacy shield - when they wish to work independently and without interruption"!

Table 14

Teachers' comments regarding students' independent use of writing folders

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. Decorate cover/design for each section	1	2	8
. Privacy shield/when they wish to work independently and without interruption	7	6	-
. Ideas, pictures for future stories are kept in pre-writing section/lists from data-base, worklists, drawings	4	2	4
. Provides storage for reading materials, other materials, test results, vocabulary, pens, disks, notes	2	4	3
. Independent study/students ask to use during spare time	1	3	3
. Little independent use/none/I'm very directive	-	-	5
. Section reserved for personal, daily, weekly goals, independent work	2	-	2

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. Apply method and process to other assignments and subjects	-	-	2
Other			
. Keep records of recurring language errors	-	-	1
. Folders taken for use as general storage/some disappeared into the hands of staff members and are used to store lesson plans	-	-	1
. Use as "clipboard"	1	-	-
* No answer	45	10	9

In addition to the data regarding students' independence in the writing process, teachers were asked, "What other changes in the attitudes of your students towards their writing have you observed?" The following is a compilation of their responses:

Table 15

Teachers' comments regarding changes in students' attitudes towards their writing since using writing folders

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. More positive attitude, more enthusiasm, especially towards the folder and its organization/easy to see at what stage they left off/recognize continuity in their efforts	12	6	10
. Students accept constructive criticism better/willing to share and discuss revisions, more objective	6	-	11
. Confidence is built when they see improvement/sense of pride in their work/willing to experiment within known procedure/writing more natural	5	4	4

	Elementary	Intermediate	Secondary
. Students are more aware of the scope and importance of writing, and mechanics of writing for an audience/take writing more seriously	1	4	3
. Keen to write/using spare time to write/desire to improve and display work	5	2	-
. Very poor students are beginning to feel some success/don't feel pressured because they have a supply of ideas from which to draw	2	-	-
. More independent in terms of deciding topics/what should be published/ whether or not to complete a piece of work	-	2	-
* No answer	33	6	7

Does the use of the folder increase students' willingness to share their work?

It is probably not surprising that the brightly coloured folder made a particular impact on elementary aged students and that more than 90% of their teachers report increased willingness to share its contents with peers and teachers. Seventy-five percent also reported some increased willingness to display their work around the school. Only a minority of teachers of secondary students (33%) indicated any more willingness on the part of their students to allow their work to be put on show, but substantial majorities were more agreeable to sharing with their peers (76%) and their teachers (64%). Intermediate level students were more willing, on the whole, to share work with peers and teachers and to have it put on display.

Table 16

Percentages of teachers reporting increased student willingness to share their work more often than previously.

1 = very much, 3 = to some extent, 5 = not at all

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	N/A %
(a) With peers						
Elementary	30	39	21	3	7	-
Intermediate	30	35	9	17	9	-
Secondary	26	44	6	3	15	6
(b) With teachers						
Elementary	25	36	30	7	3	-
Intermediate	17	26	39	13	4	-
Secondary	3	29	32	12	15	9
(c) by "public" display around the school						
Elementary	11	31	33	15	5	5
Intermediate	-	26	35	26	4	9
Secondary	3	6	24	32	26	9

Further, teachers were also asked, "Have there been other ways in which the use of the writing folders has benefitted the class or the school? Explain."

As is evidenced by their responses, many teachers believe that the use of the folders has resulted in a wide variety of benefits to the schools where they are being used.

Table 17

Teachers' comments regarding the benefits of the writing folders to the class and to the school

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
• Helps children to keep work organized/ develops personal filing system/ encourages neatness and structure	12	5	5
• Students have increased interest and confidence in writing/eager to write/ enjoy using folders rarely forget to bring them	7	2	9
• Students have developed pride of ownership in their folder/adds prestige to writing assignments	2	2	7
• There are opportunities for display/ publishing stories in school newsletter/using stories in drama program	3	2	2
• Motivates students to produce more and with higher quality/students more involved/aware of process more than of product	-	3	2
• Use as a privacy divider for working	2	2	-
• Provides a positive setting for interaction	2	-	-
• Folders help to provide a concrete representation of the steps in the writing process	2	1	-
• Encourages teachers to spend more time on prewriting and revision	-	-	2
Other			
• Some have made folders for other curriculum areas/helps keep track of work in other areas	1	1	-
• Spelling of difficult words have been kept on a card for future stories	-	1	1

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. "They organized me - everything has come together but more work is needed by me"	-	1	-
. Hopefully can bring staff together for professional development	1	-	-
* No answer	31	6	13

Reporting, and Parent Reactions

Another important part of the field study was to ascertain how useful the writing folders were to the teachers for reporting purposes and, where possible, to find out how parents felt about them. Two questions explored these areas, "Have the folders been useful at reporting time?" and, "What feedback have you received from parents regarding the folders?"

There was clear agreement among teachers in all panels that writing folders were of great value to them when doing their reporting. Of special significance to the staff was the greatly improved ability to assess the progress students were making since they see writing in several phases.

Table 18

Teachers' comments regarding the usefulness of writing folders for reporting purposes

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. Yes/provides an organized method of keeping track of work at various stages/able to see and give credit for progress, imagination, development and difficulties	25	7	21
. Parents, staff advisors and other teachers can see volume and quality of writing/good way to give credit for consistent effort	21	3	11
. No/could be, but time limited and reports are extensive	4	3	5
. Somewhat/usually jot down comments on a regular basis	-	3	-
. Too much work/too bulky to handle great numbers	-	-	8

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. Marks may be "inflated" by the revision and rewriting done	-	-	2
* No answer	17	6	2

With regard to parent feedback most was obtained through parent interviews and/or parents' nights of the Open House" variety. Those parents that had had the opportunity to see the folders and have their function explained by the teachers were very favourably impressed as the following table demonstrates.

Table 19

Teachers' comments regarding parents' reactions to writing folders

	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. None, as students do not take them home	44	18	28
. Parents see reasons behind methods used in dealing with the writing process/parents impressed by progression from one stage to the next	1	2	4
. When shown folders, parents thought they were "good idea"	-	3	4
. Increased sharing at home	2	-	-
Other			
. One parent helped her son at home in making all the characters for a story he was writing (Special Education resource teacher)	1	-	-
* No answer	13	6	3

Suggestions for Improvements and for Classroom Management

A major thrust of the field study was to gather data from teaching staff that would be of assistance to those teachers who would be using the writing folders in the future. North York educators were most forthcoming. The two questions on the survey that particularly provided them with the opportunity for general input regarding their own experiences and suggestions were, "Based on your experience with the writing folders, what suggestions or changes would you recommend for new users?" and finally, "Any other comments/questions?"

Since responses to these two questions were quite detailed and comprehensive they are re-grouped and presented under the following headings:

- Suggestions for Classroom Management
- Physical Changes to the Folders
- Suggestions for Professional Development
- Comments regarding the Writing Folder Handbook
- Miscellaneous

Table 20

Teachers' suggestions for improvements and for classroom management

Suggestions for Classroom Management	Elementary (N=61) #	Intermediate (N=23) #	Secondary (N=34) #
. Use them and then decide how you want to use them/be prepared to try a number of things to develop a system/ be directive at first/use checksheets for editing and revision/insist on keeping up to date	3	1	9
. Proceed slowly with smaller groups/ don't try to correct all problems at once/gains that both students and teachers are able to assess, make the effort worthwhile	4	1	-
. We came up with a binder and tracking sheet for our conference schedule. We keep it with our writing folders. We write the titles of stories and poems the students are working on and sharing at the time. We comment for our records and discuss the phase the writing is in, draft, editing, etc.	2	-	-
. Stress finished products periodically/"sell" students on the value of the folder before handing out	1	-	1
. Spend time/instruct students on care and organization	1	1	1
. Use large blocks of time, if possible/build in time for conferencing	1	-	1

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. Have a design writing-folder cover contest/let students decorate	2	-	1
. My biggest problem is finding the time for writing and evaluation in an already overloaded schedule	2	1	-
. Let the students experiment/lay down only the broadest of principles/insist that they retain all pieces of work	-	-	1
. Have students sign for folders/ increase responsibility	1	-	-
. I would encourage teachers to set up writing stations (centres) that students visit once or twice a week	-	1	-

Physical Changes to the Folders

. Physical changes - different colours for conference grouping/larger pockets to accommodate more pages/folders warp easily when stacked/spelling word list card should be available from the beginning/difficult to carry around	11	2	3
. Pockets are too small/ plastic not durable	5	3	-
. Folders are heavy, cumbersome to carry home	3	-	3
. Excellent idea, only drawback is manageability	1	-	2
. I would recommend that the folders be designed from reinforced cardboard - cheaper - lighter - less attractive for theft. Design a "writing record" insert (like a book report card) which can be handed in at evaluation time.	-	-	1
. If the folders were smaller. they could fit into students' binders/ storage in the class is a problem	-	1	-
. Label area for name, class, school, address, etc.	1	-	-

Professional Development	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. Workshop ideas - We need help to get started/observation of folders in use would help/specific examples of students' work/suggestions on development of research skills/discussion of time factors/suggestions for conferencing	7	3	1
. Professional development - P.D. for teachers is necessary in order to be used to full advantage	2	4	1
. Unable to attend the scheduled workshop, would still like one	1	-	-
. Need more ideas and discussion of how it ties in with Active Learning	1	-	-
. Board policy (?), school policy (?) Individual use only for those who see a purpose?	1	-	-
Comments re the Writing Folder Handbook			
. Handbook - read the guidebook thoroughly/has plenty of ideas to get you started/offer instruction at the students' level/suggestions for classroom management/follow the guide, it's great	5	2	1
. Re: Handbook - Well done! Excellent suggestions	2	-	-
. I especially want to comment on the quality of the handbook. This document was an excellent blend of theory and practice. Research data was up-to-date and relevant. I learned a lot about writing.	-	1	-
. resources guide needed with strategies for conferencing	-	-	1
Miscellaneous			
. My students (who are not easily turned on to writing) enjoy the challenge now, some have more than one story on the go at the same time/increases sense of ownership	6	7	1

	Elementary #	Intermediate #	Secondary #
. It will take another year to get it "off the ground"/I would like to have had more time before being asked to evaluate	4	3	1
. I enjoy having my own folder!	-	2	1
. "Printshop" (computer software) makes great covers	2	-	-
. "New" folder supports process I have been using for years	1	-	1
. Individuality makes the use of folders especially suitable for "new" E.S.L. students	-	1	-
. Good way to encourage teachers new to English to understand the process of writing	-	1	-
. We did not realize this was a formal field test	1	-	-
. I would make much more effort to have more variety in kinds of writing	-	-	1
. Many tend to overmark and over-revise	-	-	1
. Must sequence folder use from 9 - 13	-	-	1
. Large classes make ideal implementation difficult	-	-	1
. The W.F. is an excellent idea; the only drawback is manageability. I have 3 grade 13 classes, all of which use W.F., therefore, when I collect W.F. they are cumbersome, take a fair amount of time to grade, students are therefore without them for a week at best. My understanding of the guidelines is that the W.F. process is to be primarily a class activity. Even in 75 minutes, I can only look at 2 - 3 W.F., therefore I choose not to evaluate in class. Any suggestions? or will that aspect be addressed in the final, formal guidelines? If a cursory look is all that is to be given to the W.F., it loses its impact value.	-	-	1

	Elementary	Intermediate	Secondary
. It was very difficult to answer the percentage questions on the first page, since all kinds of activities overlap into one another and I try not to plan too rigidly. There is a writing period of some kind more or less every day (20 - 30 minutes), which is often stimulated by something that was said/ occurred during the rest of the lesson. The "surprise" element seems to work, positively.	-	-	1
. Children who have come from other North York schools who had folders, did not bring them or the contents. It was my understanding that this should happen	1	-	-
. As it often is with change instituted from the top down, these writing folders do not fill a real need. They are too narrow for one thing, and won't hold much. Also they rip easily. If kept in the classroom there is a great to do getting them out and putting them away again. (Time consuming). Also, to really use the folders one has to restructure one's entire teaching technique. Directions for use came in a wordy, jargonesque booklet. Maybe these folders work in a school where students come every day, but I find them impractical. Presently I use them to store marked material.	-	-	1
Total *"no answers" for #22 and #23	57	17	36

IV RESULTS OF CLASSROOM VISITS

Procedures

The second component of the study involved visitations to selected classrooms by the members of the Writing Folder Steering Committee to observe students using the folders in class. To facilitate this task, the Committee had previously determined what they would be looking for and had designed a checklist form for recording their observations (Appendix B). The instrument was not intended to elicit judgemental responses from the observers, but only to record practices, features and/or behaviours which were evident during the classroom visit as an objective indication of how the writing folders were actually being used.

To supplement their classroom observations, the Committee members also took time to examine the folders of at least three randomly selected students per class and, where possible, to have informal discussions with students about their use of and feelings towards the writing folders.

In total, visits were conducted in 12 classrooms in nine different schools across all three panels. Although the number of classes observed was not large, the sample represented a good cross-section of programs - regular classes, special education, E.S.L., gifted, French immersion and basic, general and advanced classes at the secondary level. Visits to semestered schools were done before the end of the first semester, with all others completed by the end of February.

The visits, on average, lasted about an hour, during which time the observers were able to examine three or more student writing folders. In most cases the writing folders had only been in use at the school for three months or less, except for three classes which had been using the folders for four to six months.

The following summary represents a compilation of the information which each observer recorded on the observation checklist forms and submitted to the Research department. Of the 12 returns; seven were from the elementary panel, four were secondary panel responses and one was from the intermediate level. Results are presented for the total group only, except where there are any noticeable panel differences, under the following categories:

- physical environment
- description of the folders and inserts
- use of the folders and evaluation
- student attitudes towards writing folders
- discussions with students

Physical Environment

Generally, the writing folders are stored in a central location in the classroom (7), or in the students own desk, file or locker (5). In all but one instance, the folders were considered to be quickly and easily accessible. Work on the folders is most often done at the students' own desks (11), however, there were also reports of writing being done on the floor, at a writing centre (elementary panel only), at the teachers' table or at home.

In more than half the classes, samples of writing were displayed around the room and in a few others there were displays relating to the folders or the writing process itself (i.e. writing rules . . .). The practice of teacher-modelling, e.g. the teacher maintaining a folder as an example, was mentioned by only one secondary teacher. An elementary teacher said that although she kept a folder, she had little opportunity to use it.

Description of the Folders and Inserts

Approximately 35 writing folders in total were examined by committee members during the classroom visits. The folders themselves seem to have held up after the first months of use. Evidence of "wear-and-tear" was reported in only three classrooms, all at the secondary level.

Within the folders, a variety of inserts was evident. The majority of folders examined included a combination of the following types of inserts:

- student-produced inserts
- teacher-produced inserts (i.e. computer-produced or copied covers and inserts)
- personalized inserts (i.e. covers with the student's name on it)

A more detailed description of the inserts within each of the pockets reveals a fairly consistent understanding of the writing process across all the panels. Only two or three of the folders examined in elementary classrooms were not being used according to the principles of the process of writing.

The first pocket was used almost exclusively for prewriting and brainstorming activities or lists of writing assignments and possible topics. Some typical titles on the inserts included:

- things I like to write; story idea notes; brain-waves; bright ideas; starting points; things to help me write; where can I find information?

The second pocket was usually reserved for first drafts and writing in progress. Many of the inserts also provided ideas or hints relating to the preliminary revision process. For example:

- how to revise and edit; errors I often make; first edition; steps for proofreading; skills to be learned; editing/conference checklist; Shake/shuffle and shift!; for my eyes only.

The third pocket contained revised work and/or final copies of writing, often with inserts to remind the writer of the final steps in the editing process. Some representative titles for this pocket were:

- good copy, second edition; stories I have written; checked stories; or revise and/or edit checklists; sharing; proofreading checklist; catch the goofs!; almost there!; did I check . . . ?

Some students also used the remaining pockets on the folders for various purposes, e.g. usually for a personalized cover on the outside pocket or perhaps for finished products in the back pocket. Other uses included: storage for blank paper, list of books I have read, a "sharing" record, favourite words, and a description of the writing process.

In terms of the quantity of writing, the tendency (at least at the junior high and secondary levels) seemed to be a reduction in the actual number of pieces of writing as one moves through the writing process from prewriting, through to writing and postwriting. Secondary students also tended to write more than those in elementary or junior high schools. In some cases, the observers recorded the actual number of pieces per pocket and from those figures an average number was calculated:

Average Number of Pieces of Writing in Pockets

	Elementary	Junior High	Secondary
. prewriting	2	5	10
. writing	6	4	8
. postwriting and/or finished products	2	3	6

Generally, the observation was that the "writing process" was evident in the folders in terms of organization and progression and that usually the visual quality of the writing improved as it progressed through each subsequent stage.

One observer in an elementary classroom, however, noted that the writing process was evident by the labels and inserts, but less so by the actual content. Another remarked that not all phases of the process were evident in the folder yet.

Use of the Folders and Evaluation

While observing the classroom or examining individual folders, the committee members looked for evidence of"conferencing" or formative evaluation of writing in progress. Verbal interaction between students and teachers was the most frequently mentioned method of conferencing, although verbal interaction among students and written student/teacher interaction were also observed in a majority of the classrooms visited. There was, however, little evidence of any significant written interaction among students.

The most concrete proof of formative conferencing was the comments, notes or revisions written on drafts of writing. There did not seem to be much other formal record-keeping of conference activities or regular scheduling of conference times for each child at this point.

The changes made by students during the revision process were primarily technical in nature. Almost all the observers, for example, noted corrections in spelling, grammar and sentence structure. Other changes, in descending order of frequency, were vocabulary, development of ideas, and clarification of ideas. In a few cases, it was difficult to determine what changes had been made when students didn't keep all the drafts or removed work from the folder after each assignment.

The extent of final marking or summative evaluation varied by panel. In most classrooms at the elementary level, there was little or no evidence of final marks on finished products of writing. This could either be a reflection of the

time of year (i.e. too early for final marking) or the focus on anecdotal evaluation at the elementary level, as opposed to numerical or letter grading.

At the junior high and secondary levels, records of marks were kept by both the teacher and the students. Writing was always marked by the teacher, although in two classrooms students also evaluated each others' work. The predominant method for evaluation in the senior panels was a combination of numerical and anecdotal reporting, with occasional use of letter grading.

About half of the observers commented that writing folders were supplemented by notebooks, journals and/or hanging files. It was also noted that finished pieces of writing were frequently shared with others through such vehicles as publications, newsletters, yearbooks, contests, displays, sharing with or reading to classmates, and/or mailing to pen pals.

Students' Attitudes Towards Writing Folders

All but one of the classroom observers said that the students demonstrated pride in and ownership of their writing folders and in over half the classrooms visited, it was observed that students used their folders during free-time.

Overall, the tone of the classroom and the attitudes of students when the folders were in use were very positive. Feelings of cooperation and fraternity seemed to pervade the environment in classrooms where there was a lot of discussion and sharing and students helping one another. The children themselves were described as happy, excited, involved, and busy or task-oriented. Some teachers found them to be more eager, to work more productively or to be less inhibited within a group.

In one elementary classroom, however, there did not appear to be much enthusiasm for the writing folder; the children seemed to be somewhat discouraged and tended to work individually with limited discussion with their peers. At the secondary level, one person remarked that some students who were behind in their work felt "sheepish".

Discussions with Students

This last section is based on informal discussions with a few randomly selected students in each classroom, representing almost 35 students in total. The majority of students said that they liked using the folder for writing, a few said it was "okay" (i.e. to put your stuff in) and only one did not like it. Similarly, most of the students thought that their classmates also felt positively about the writing folders. A few said their classmates' reaction was mixed (some yes, some no) and 10 others were not sure what other students thought about it.

Each student who was interviewed was asked to explain how the folders were used by describing a typical writing assignment. In almost every case the process of writing was evident in their response, at least in part. The majority of respondents described a procedure for doing a writing assignment which paralleled all the steps of the writing process. A few students, although apparently aware of the concept, mentioned only some parts of the process -

usually omitting the prewriting or sharing components. Only two responses, at the elementary level, revealed improper use of the writing folder and/or a lack of awareness of the writing process (i.e. used for paper storage, not accurately sorted).

Students seemed to like the folders best as a means for keeping their work organized (i.e. it looks neat; I know where everything is,. keeps stories together; stories won't get ruined; it saves space . . .). Elementary pupils in particular liked "all the pockets!". A few of them also liked keeping their work private, so that others can't see it or liked being able to use pictures in their folders.

There were not too many complaints about the folder itself. A few students in the senior grades found the folders to be too large and bulky or were "a hassle" to carry around because they didn't fit in a binder. In the lower grades, some students complained that there were not enough pockets or that the pockets were too tight and could not hold all their stories.

When asked how they felt about re-writing for revisions and editing, students generally felt that it was a good idea and that it improved their work. They remarked that their work was neater, that they learned from their mistakes and that editing helped them to develop good writing skills and a better understanding of the writing process. Those students who didn't like the revision process said that it was boring, discouraging or too much work.

Although many students either did not respond or did not feel any differently about writing after having used the folders, several students in the elementary grades remarked that they were more interested in writing or liked writing better now. Other comments included: this is my favourite notebook, it's easier; I have a lot more ideas now . . .

Most students also noted ways in which their actual writing had changed or improved. Elementary pupils especially thought that they wrote more often, wrote better or longer stories, had better ideas, were more organized or had improved skills. Others reported that they had learned how to edit and improve their work or had tried different styles of writing. Some senior students tended to agree that their writing had improved or that they'd acquired new skills but did not necessarily attribute these changes to the writing folder. The benefits of the editing/revision process, however, were acknowledged.

To complete the discussion, students were given an opportunity to offer suggestions for change or for more effective use of the folders. The most common request was for more pockets or for longer/bigger/looser pockets. A few students also suggested that the folder should have a holder(s) for a pencil, eraser and/or ruler. Miscellaneous, single responses included the following:

- velcro to keep it together
- smooth down the sharp edges
- dividers within the pockets
- we should be marked on the "process"
- folders should be free for grade 12's

V SUMMARY

On the basis of both the survey responses of teacher-users and the classroom observations of folders in use, the writing folders seem to be well received by the teachers and students who use them and are perceived to have had a positive effect on students' writing in terms of process as well as product. A brief overview of the results, with reference to the objectives stated at the outset of the study, confirms this.

- An average of 86% of the teacher respondents from all three panels agreed that the use of writing folders had helped students to **improve their writing skills,** while three-quarters of them also noted that their students were **attempting more and different writing** styles than they had previously. In discussions during the classroom visits, some of the students themselves also added that they had learned from their mistakes and that the revision/editing process had improved the quality of their work and helped them to develop better writing skills as well as new skills.

- Many teachers also suggested ways in which the folders had **improved their ability to assess and modify programs** to meet student needs. The most frequent comment was that the use of writing folders had helped teachers to individualize their writing program, i.e. by identifying individual needs, interests and/or skills. Similarly the increased emphasis on the writing process was considered important and helped teachers to focus on the developmental nature of students' writing. The folder itself, as an organizational tool, was also perceived to be beneficial in assessing the programs.

- The survey results indicated that a large majority of the responding teachers (ranging from almost 80% at the secondary level to 90% at the elementary level) felt that their students had been **motivated to write more frequently** since the writing folders had been introduced into the classroom. Some of the students, particularly at the elementary schools, also commented that they wrote more often, liked writing better and wrote better or longer stories.

- The examination of randomly selected folders during the classroom visits revealed that in almost every case the pockets and inserts were organized to reflect the principles of the process of writing. This would suggest that the students had therefore been **encouraged to organize their work** accordingly. In fact, when students were asked what they liked best about the folders the most frequent response referred to the writing folder as an organizational tool (i.e. I know where everything is, it keeps my stories together . . .)

- Again the examination of the folders' pockets and inserts, along with student descriptions of how a writing assignment is typically done, confirmed that students, for the most part, were aware of and **could clarify the steps in the writing process.** Although the majority of students described procedures which incorporated all the phases in the process, a few students neglected to mention either the prewriting or sharing components.

- There was a high degree of consensus among the respondents from all three panels that use of the folders provided teachers with **enough satisfactory pieces of writing for evaluation** - including formative evaluation (90%) as well as summative evaluation (83%). Supporting comments revealed that generally there was lots of material to mark; sometimes even too much. It was also noted that the organization within the folder facilitated discussions at each stage of the writing process as well as final product evaluation.

- At least 8 out of every 10 teachers reported an **increased willingness for students to share their work** either with their teacher or with each other - likely a direct result of the inclusion of a sharing component in the writing process. The classroom visits also revealed a lot of "conferencing" as part of the formative evaluation process - primarily in the form of verbal interactions between the students and the teachers, but often among students as well.

- There was also some evidence that students were beginning to take **more responsibility for their own learning** in that they were more likely to approach their teachers for help with their writing and were more willing to revise and edit their own work. These observations were reported by about two-thirds of the teachers for the first point, and by at least three-quarters of the staff in the latter case. Students, themselves, generally acknowledged that re-writing was a good idea and improved their work.

- In terms of attitudes, the majority of students we talked to said they liked using the writing folders and the perceptions of both the teachers responding to the survey and the classroom observers supported this. Students were said to demonstrate pride and ownership in their folders; to be more positive and enthusiastic about writing; more confident; more willing to share, discuss, and accept criticism; more aware of the importance of writing; more co-operative and more productive.

- Finally, teaching staff offered various suggestions for change or recommendations for new users. The majority of these comments centred around suggested techniques for classroom management, ideas for professional development or modifications to the actual folder.

APPENDIX A

WRITING FOLDERS FIELD STUDY

Questionnaire

1. Name of School _____ Grade _____

2. Position _____
(e.g., teacher, chairperson, convener, department head)

3. Type of Class _____
(e.g., regular, gifted, behavioural)

4. Course Level (if applicable) _____
(e.g., basic, general, advanced, etc.)

5. (a) Have you used writing folders previously?

Yes No

(b) If yes, for how long? _____

6. Approximately how many hours each week do students use their writing folders?

(a) in school _____ (b) at home _____ ?

7. Estimate the proportion of time your students use their writing folders for the major types of writing.

Transactional	___ %
Expressive	___ %
Poetic	___ %
Total	100 %

8. (a) Approximately what percentage of your classroom writing time is spent on pre-writing activities?

_____

(b) Assuming that all writing begins with pre-writing activities, what percentage of these would proceed to:

(i) writing _____

(ii) post-writing _____ ?

9. Does the process of using the folders provide you with enough satisfactory pieces of work for evaluation purposes?

   a) Formative (writing in process) Yes No

   b) Summative (final products) Yes No

   Please comment. _____

   _____

   _____

10. How has using the writing folders helped you to assess and modify your writing program to meet the needs of your students?

    Explain, or give examples. _____

    _____

    _____

Your Students

NOTE: In responding to questions 11 - 16 select a box along the continuum that best expresses the degree of change that you think has occurred. 1 = very much, 3 = to some extent, 5 = not at all.

To what extent	1	2	3	4	5
11. has the use of the writing folders motivated your students to write more often than previously?					
12. do you think the use of the folders has helped to improve students' writing skills?					
13. has the use of the folders improved students' willingness to revise and edit their work?					
14. are your students attempting more and different styles of writing than they did before?					
15. do your students approach you more often for assistance with their writing?					
16. do your students share their work more often than previously?					
(i) with peers					
(ii) with teacher(s)					
(iii) by "public" display around the school?					

17. Have there been other ways in which the use of the writing folders has benefitted the class or the school? Explain.

18. What other changes in the attitudes of your students towards their writing have you observed?

19. What ways have the students devised for their independent use of the folders?

General

20. Have the folders been useful at reporting time?

21. What feedback have you received from parents regarding the folders?

22. Based on your experience with the writing folders, what suggestions or changes would you recommend for new users?

_____

_____

_____

23. Any other comments/questions?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name (optional) _____

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this survey.

PLEASE RETURN TO THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT BY MARCH 24, 1986.

APPENDIX B

Classroom Visit Checklist
Use of Writing Folders

The following checklist outlines numerous observable features and/or behaviours relating to the use of the writing folders. When visiting a classroom, look for evidence of each of these and record your observations. It is anticipated that you will have time to examine the folders of at least three randomly selected students (more, if possible). Ideally, they will be able to go through the folders with you. Please elaborate and comment on or describe your observations whenever necessary. Take some time at the end of your visit to informally chat with the teacher and record these comments as well.

A. Background

School: _____

Grade/type of class: _____

Date: _____

Length of visit: _____

Number of folders examined: _____

How long have the folders been in use? _____

B. Physical Environment

. Folders are stored:

- in one central location
- in students' own desk/file/locker
- other (specify) _____

Folders are quickly and easily accessible

Teacher-modelling, e.g. teacher maintains a folder as an example

Samples of writing are displayed around the room

Displays relating to or describing the writing process and folders are evident

. When using the folders, students work:

- at their own desk
- at a writing centre
- on the floor
- other (specify) _____

C. Description of the Folders and Inserts

(1) (2) (3)

Folders show evidence of "wear-and-tear"

Teacher produced inserts

Student produced inserts

Personalized inserts

Individualized inserts

. Description of insert (e.g. title, contents . . .)

First pocket:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Second pocket:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Third pocket:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Other(s):

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

. Quantity of writing in each pocket (actual # of pieces):

(1) (2) (3)

- pre-writing
- writing
- post-writing
- finished products (not in folder)
- other _____

The "writing process" is evident in the folder in terms of organization and progression.

The visual quality of writing improves as it progresses through each stage.

D. Use of the Folders/Evaluation

. Evidence of conferencing (formative evaluation):

(1) (2) (3)

- written student/teacher interaction
- verbal student/teacher interaction

- written student/student interaction
- verbal student/student interaction

- regular conference times are scheduled for each student
- comments/notes are evident on drafts of writing
- records of conferencing are kept by the student or teacher

. Changes evident during revision included:

(1) (2) (3)

- ideas
- development of ideas
- clarification of ideas
- spelling
- grammar
- vocabulary
- sentence structure
- other(s) _____

_____

. Evidence of final marking (summative evaluation):

(1) (2) (3)

- quantity (# of finished samples marked)

- record of marks kept by the - student
  - teacher

- marked by the - student
  - teacher

. Methods of evaluation:

- letter grading
- numerical
- anecdotal

. Outcomes of writing after it leaves the folder:

- publications
- extended activities (e.g. plays, booklets . .)
- extended to other curriculum areas
- other _____

_____

- Supplements to folders, e.g. notebooks, journals, hanging files, etc. (Describe)

E. Attitudes

Students use folders during free time
Free time use is spontaneous, self-directed
Free time use is teacher directed

Students demonstrate pride and ownership re their folders

. Describe student attitudes tone of the classroom when using the writing folders. (e.g. happy, excited, lots of discussion and sharing, reluctant . . .)

_____

_____

F. Discussions with Students

- do you like using a folder for writing? _____
- what do your classmates think of it? _____
- describe how it is used (perhaps use one piece of writing as an example)

_____

_____

_____

- what do you like best about it? _____

_____

- is there anything about using the folder that you don't like?

_____

_____

- how do you feel about changing or re-writing your work for revisions and editing?

_____

_____

- do you think the folder has made any difference to how you feel about writing? e.g. like it better? less? no change?

_____

_____

- has your writing changed in any way? (prove: write more often, use different forms/styles of writing, have acquired new skill)

_____

_____

- any suggestions for change? for more effective use?

_____

_____